ment Commissioner (Handicrafts) are required to be disposed of through the following channels in order of priority:

(i) Handicrafts & Handlooms Export Corporation of India Ltd.

OR

Centra] Cottage Industries Corporation of India Ltd.

OR

State Govt. Emporia.

(ii) Registered Organisations and Firms/Bodies etc.

(iii) General Public, and

(iv) Public Auction.

(b) No, Sir. The procedure has not been violated. There have been one or two instances of sale before fixation of price only to Public Sector Corporations on the condition that the latter would pay whatever price is subsequently fixed by the Carpet Disposal Committee set up by the Govt. The Corporations in all cases have paid the price fixed by the Govt. hence the panel clause has not been invoked

in any case.

(c) No, Sir. Sales tax was collected but in some cases the amount had not been shown as a separate head. This has since been rectified and settled in consultation with the Sales Tax Authorities and the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) has been directed to pay Rs. 4. 86 lakhs against the years 1983-84 and 1984-85 as arrears dues along with interest

(d) The omission is not showing the Sales Tax and the Cost Price of the Carpets in two distinct heads was on account of the fact that the T. R. (V) receipts against which sales were effected, did not have a separate Sales Tax column. On being advised bv the Sales Tax Autho_ rities. proper cash memos instead of T. R. (V) forms are being issued w. e. f. 1985-86 for sale of trainees carpets. Hence no action is required to be taken.

Number of branches of the Nationalised Banks in rural areas

*256. KUMARI ALIA:

SHRI KAPIL VERM A.

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of branches of the nationalised banks in rural areas at the beginning of the current Plan period and at present; and

(b) what steps are being taken to expand services of the nationalised banks in the rural sector?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE); (a) and (b) The number of branches of 28 Public Sector Banks in rural areas as on 1-4-1985 (beginning of the current plan period) was 29, 837. The number of such branches as on 31-12-1989 (latest figures available) was 33, 640. The current Branch Licensing Policy (1985—90) will come to an end on 31-3-1990. The new Branch Licensing Policy is being finalised by the Reserve Bank of India.

Banking facilities at grassroot level in rural areas

*257. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to provide banking facilities at grassroot level in the rural areas in order to help the village and small scale industry;

(b) if to, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what steps are being proposed to be taken to educate the rural self-employed people about the availability of these facilities?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) to (c) There is an extensive net work of banking facilities for catering to **the** credit needs of rural borrowers. As at

the end of September, 1989, there were 32, 873 branches of commercial banks, 14, 129 branches of Regional Rural Banks and 90, 081 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies, catering extensively to rural credit needs. For the commercial banks, under the Service Area Approach, each branch in rural/semi-urban centres has been allotted 15 to 25 villages for meeting credit needs of the area. The details of credit facilities available under different schemes are required to be exhibited in such branches. They also, observe one day in a week as non-public . business working day for visiting rural areas and other development works. Besides, the application forms for loans under various schemes have been prescribed in regional languages.

Financial assistance for Tripura Jute Mills

*258. SHRI NARAYAN KAR: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to sanction one time grant of Rs. Twenty crore to run the Tripura Jute Mills Limited, Agartala; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Conversion of dearness allowance into dearness pay

*259. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR:

Weil the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Fourth Central Pay Commission had recommended the formation of a Permanent Wage Board, in consultation wiih the National Council of the Joint Consultative Machinery; if so, what is Government's response thereto and the probable terms and conditions of the said Board; and

(b) whether Government propose to convert the whole or a part of the dearness allowance into dearness pay; if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) The Fourth Central Pay Commision suggested that Government may set up a. permanent body, which should be responsible for maintaining and updating the basic data on pay and allowances of Government employees and to review the pay scales and rates of allowances and other related matters. In this recommendation consultation with National Council of JCM has not been envisaged. The Government after examination of the suggestion decided that Ministry of Finance may set up a compact unit, which should be responsible for maintaining and updating the basic data on pay and allowances of Government employees and other related matters. Not satisfied with this decision of the Government, the Staff Side of the National Council (JCM) raised a demand for implementing the recommendations of the Commission in this reeard in full. A Committee, with the Finance Secretary as the Chairman, and including *inter alia* the Staff members of the Standing Committee of the JCM was set up to go into this question further. Though the matter was discussed at a number of meetings of this Committee, it has not been found possible so far to arrive at a consensus.

(b) There is no proposal under consideration of the Government to convert the whole or a part of the Dearness Allowance into Dearness pay.